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## Child Abuse Prevention to be Focus at Conference *Lt. Bill Walsh Will be a Presenter*

**Columbia-** Emphasizing that deterrence is prevention, the Missouri Department of Social Services' (DSS) State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) will host a conference on child abuse investigations October 7-8 at the Courtyard by Marriott at Highway 63 and Grindstone in Columbia. More than 200 child protection professionals have registered to attend the conference, which is called "The Professional Investigation of Child Abuse". DSS Children's Division employees, law enforcement officers, Missouri Probation and Parole officers, juvenile officers, health employees and mental health employees plan to attend.

"It will be a comprehensive two-day program," STAT Chief Gus Kolilis said. "We will examine computer exploitation and serious injuries and fatalities."

Retired Dallas Police Department Lt. Bill Walsh will be the main presenter during the conference. Lt. Walsh served as Commander of the Dallas Police Department's Crimes Against Children Unit.

"Mr. Walsh is an expert interviewer, interrogator and investigator," Kolilis said. "He does training all over the world. He also hosts one of the largest child abuse prevention conferences in the country, co-sponsored by the Dallas Police and the Dallas Child Advocacy Center which is held annually in Dallas."

The conference's opening speaker will be child and family consultant Jill Molli. Her presentation at 8 am on October 7 will be open to the news media. Dr. Douglas Beal, a forensic pediatrician, will also be a presenter on October 7. Lt. Walsh and Dr. Beal will be available for media interviews from 7-8 a.m. on October 7.

STAT collects and correlates standardized child fatality review data for all 114 Missouri counties and St. Louis City, in an effort to identify patterns, spikes and ultimately child abuse and neglect prevention strategies. Since 1992, STAT has traveled all over the country assisting other states in developing a child fatality review process.

STAT's integrated approach to managing Missouri's Child Fatality Review Program while operating a commissioned law enforcement unit remains unique nationwide. Collectively, the team has more than 300 years of law enforcement experience. STAT provides child specific law enforcement services and support, child fatality reviews and partners with

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the Children's Division, Children's Trust Fund (CTF), Head Start, Parents as Teachers, Missouri Kids First and the St. Louis Safe Sleep Coalition on prevention efforts.

Since 1993, STAT has been a state and national forerunner in investigating computer child pornography. STAT provides technical support and law enforcement assistance in the area of computer forensic investigations and prevention. STAT is an active member of several regional and national task forces.

This summer, CTF awarded a \$28,000 grant to STAT. All of the grant money is being used to support training child protection professionals across the state in 2008, including this conference.

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